

# Prospecting within Prescott National Forest



The Forest Service recognizes gold panning and metal detecting as legitimate recreational pursuits. In doing so, these activities are allowed forest wide, but visitors need to be aware of areas that are excluded from prospecting or mining.

- **Private lands:** These lands are not open to prospecting or mining without the owner's permission. National Forest visitor maps, for sale at all Forest Service offices, show the general location of these privately owned tracts/lands.
- **Claimed lands:** Prospecting on such land is considered trespassing. Check with local country records to see if any claim(s) are recorded in the area of interest. Location also needs to be visually observed for any claim monuments or stakes.
- **Restricted areas:** Areas within Prescott national Forest are not available for prospecting and mining, including panning for gold are Wilderness areas, mineral withdrawal areas (included the Hassayampa River Corridor) and developed recreation sites. The local ranger district office can provide information about these specific areas.

Recreational panning is allowed in the Lynx Creek Mineral Withdrawal area. Prospecting, mining and filing of mining claims in the Lynx Creek Withdrawal area are not allowed. The area on the attached map was withdrawn from mineral exploration by a series of public land orders issued between 1957 and 1971. The withdrawal was done to protect the scenic values, riparian vegetation and recreational opportunities of the area.

In doing so, these activities will be allowed in this area and forest wide, subject to the following prohibitions designed to protect the environment.

- **All persons are prohibited from mutilation, defacing, removing, disturbing, injuring or destroying any natural feature or any property of the United States. (Title 36 CFR 261.9a)**
- **It is prohibited to use any motorized or mechanical equipment or mining aids for mineral extraction within the boundaries of the withdrawal area, as defined on the attached map. (Title 36 CFR 261.53e&f)**
  - Motorized equipment includes: any equipment having or using an engine or motor.
  - Mechanical equipment and mining aids include: sluice boxes, dry washer, gold screws, gold bugs, rocker boxes, wheel barrow, suction dredges or other devices designed to increase production above the level obtained with gold pans and hand tools.
- **Violation of these prohibitions is punishable by a fine of not more than \$5000.00 or imprisonment for not more than 6 months or both.**

### **Use of Metal Detectors on the National Forest Service**

The allowable use of metal detectors on National Forest System lands takes a number of different forms. Detectors that are used in searching for treasure trove, locating historical and pre-historical artifacts and features require a Special Use Permit.



### **Recreational Detecting**

Searching for coins or recent vintage (less than 50 years) and small objects having no historical value, as a recreational pursuit, using a hand-held metal detector, does not currently require a Special Use Permit as long the use of the equipment is confined to areas which do not possess historic or prehistoric resources.



## **Treasure Trove**

The search of treasure trove, which is defined as money, unmounted gems, or precious metals in the form of coin, plate or bullion that has been deliberately hidden with the intention of recovering it later is an activity which is regulated by the Forest Service. Searching for treasure trove has the potential of causing considerable disturbance and damage to resources and thus requires a Special Use Permit from the Forest Service. Methods utilized for treasure trove must be specified in the permits issued. Permits may not be granted in each and every case, but applications will be reviewed with attention being paid to the justification given and guarantees for the restoration of any damages that might occur to resources. The use of metal detectors in searching for treasure trove is permissible when under this type of permit, but must be kept within the conditions of the permit.



## **Historic / Prehistoric / Archeological Artifacts**

The use of metal detectors to locate objects of historic, pre-historic or archeological value is permissible subject to the provisions of the Antiquities Act of 1906, the Archeological Resources Preservation Act of 1979, and the Secretary of Agriculture's regulations. Such use requires a Special Use Permit covering the exploration, excavation or removal of historic archeological materials and information. Such permits are available for legitimate historical research activities by qualified individuals. Unauthorized use of metal detectors in the search of historic and archeological artifacts is a violation of existing regulations and statutes.



## **Mineral Deposits**

The use of a metal detector to locate mineral deposits such as gold and silver on National Forest System lands is considered prospecting and is subject to the provisions of the General Mining Law of 1872. Questions concerning the use of metal detection equipment should be referred to the applicable District Office.

### **Important Mining and Recreational Tips**

- Pick/shovel excavations may only be done in conjunction with gold panning and metal detecting and must be made below the high water mark on the stream channel. All excavations must be filled in before leaving the area.
- Do not cut trees, limbs or brush. Do not dig up ground cover
- Pack out everything you brought into the area, especially trash.
- Do not wash yourself or your dishes in any creeks or streams on the Prescott National Forest. All wash water is to be contained and disposed of, off the National Forest Land. Bury human waste four to six inches deep and at least 100 feet from a stream and/or channel.

Additional information can be obtained from the Prescott National offices.

**TO REPORT FOREST EMERGENCIES**  
**TO REPORT ANY OTHER EMERGENCIES**

**928-777-5700**  
**911**